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CITY OF SIOUX FALLS
FALLS PARK, SOUTH DAKOTA
DECEMBER 10, 2018

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VISIT DATE	October 29, 2018
CONTACT/TITLE	Karen Leonard, Deputy City Attorney
LOCATION VISITED	Falls Park in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

SERVICE OBJECTIVE

My primary objective was to visit Falls Park located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and provide an independent review of the drowning risk associated with Big Sioux River and Falls which pass through the park.

SUMMARY

Considerations and recommended steps to help mitigate the drowning risks are based on observations listed below along with the visit to the park on October 29, 2018. Visitor attendance is at a lower level at this time of year than during the summer months and considered "off season".

- Reviewed the documents provided including reports of past incidents and past risk management reports.
- Conducted physical observations along the East and West banks of the Big Sioux River. The area I covered ranged North slightly past the railroad tracks, and South slightly past East Falls Park Drive.
- Conversations with Karen Leonard, Stacy Kooistra, Don Kearney, and Kelby Mieras to discuss past incidents, corrective action which has already been taken or will take place in the near future.
- A closing meeting with Karen Leonard, Don Kearney, and Kelby Mieras to discuss preliminary findings and possible suggestions.
- Observations of existing exposures, related safeguards, and visitor activity are from October 29, 2018.

FINDINGS

- 1) Overall, it appears that the Park authorities have implemented thoughtful and adequate controls to address the primary drowning exposure associated with Big Sioux River and Falls in the areas observed on October 29, 2018.

Control measures and safeguards included:

- A) Designated walking path
- B) Several viewing stations throughout the park to deter free access to the river
- C) Properly worded and placed signage
- D) Guard rails along parts of the path and viewing stations

- 2) Numerous visitors were observed disregarding currently established warnings and safeguards so they could get closer to the falls and river. In most cases these were teenagers or adults, but some situations were noted which involved younger aged children.
- 3) Landmarks such as de-commissioned platforms, stairways, and other relics were observed along the East bank. It was indicated these are of historical significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Suggestions below are based on the survey findings from October 29, 2018. The intent is to reduce the likelihood of falling into the river due to proximity of visitors to the river's edge, potential unsure footing associated with weather elements and mist from the falls, and observed tendencies of visitors.

Rec #	Recommendation Details
2018-1	<p>Consider making the sandy path along the East river bank less accessible to visitors.</p> <p>This sandy path allows easy access to a large grouping of river rocks made slippery from the mist of the falls. The path was observed to be frequently traveled by visitors, even though a viewing platform was readily available in the immediate vicinity.</p> <p>Possible solutions could include extending the existing metal guard railing, or positioning large boulders or other natural barriers to maintain the park aesthetics while still providing a safeguard to this area.</p> <p>Reference pictures below #5-8</p>
2018-2	<p>Further eliminate access to the rock formation that juts out into the river from the existing viewing platform to reduce the possibility of visitors slipping and falling from potential moisture caused by rain, sleet, or snowfall combined with the steep angle of the rock formation.</p> <p>This could be accomplished by extending the existing guard railing to close the gap between railing and the viewing platform. The rock formation and viewing platform are located on the West bank of the river.</p> <p>Reference pictures below # 9-10</p>
2018-3	<p>Extend the metal vertical guard railing beyond its current point to further mitigate access to the area along the East bank of the river, which includes the single set of concrete stairs that are North of the low head dam. These stairs were indicated to have historical significance.</p>

This area represents a potential "attractive nuisance to Falls Café patrons and the existing wooden fence appears to be easily by-passed by adults, minors, and young children.

Reference pictures below #1-4

PHOTOS



Pic #1

Stairs (historical) just North of Low Head Dam, East bank of river



Pic #2

Stairs (historical) just North of Low Head Dam, East bank



Pic #3

Fencing by Stairs, East side of River



Pic #4

Fencing by Stairs, East side of River



Pic #5

Path leading down to slippery rocks, East bank of river



Pic #6

Slippery Rocks, East bank of River



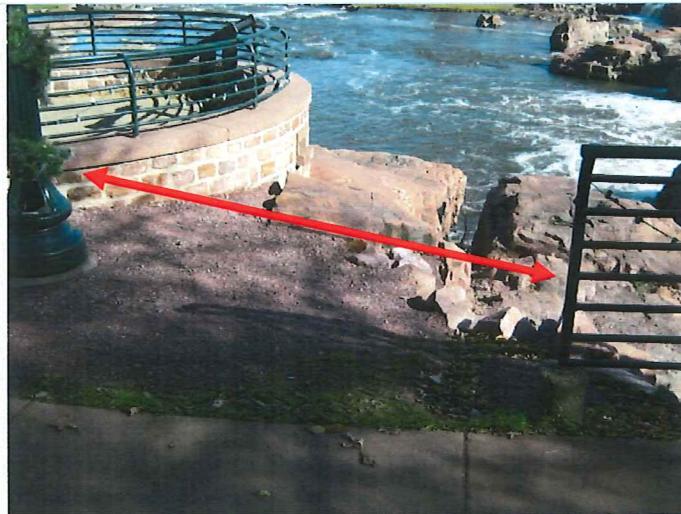
Pic #7

Slippery rocks past sandy path, East bank of river



Pic #8

Slippery rocks past sandy path, East bank of river



Pic #9

Gap between existing railing and platform, West bank of River



Pic #10

Rocks beyond gap between railing and platform, West bank of River

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